

Civil Rights

General Overview

The eight-member Civil Rights Commission was established by the State Constitution of 1963. Members of the bipartisan Commission are appointed by the Governor with advice and consent of the Senate. The Commission is directed by the Constitution to investigate “alleged discrimination against any person because of religion, race, color or national origin and to secure the equal protection of such civil rights without such discrimination”. The Commission appoints the Director of the Department who carries out the mission through the Department.

The Department of Civil Rights investigates alleged discrimination based on religion, race, color, national origin, sex, age, height, and weight (in employment only), marital status, familial status (in housing only), arrest record (in employment applications), and physical disability or mental disability against any person in employment, public accommodations, public service, education, or housing, as provided by the State Constitution, civil rights laws, and the Governor’s executive orders. The Department also seeks to prevent discrimination through educational programs encouraging voluntary compliance with civil rights laws. The Department provides information and services to businesses regarding diversity issues and equal employment law. Regional offices are located in Detroit, Grand Rapids, Lansing, Flint, and Marquette.

Major Divisions and Programs

Office of Civil Rights Operations. This office includes the intake unit and enforcement staff that investigate and try to resolve complaints. The work includes housing and employment discrimination complaints investigated pursuant to Federal contracts with the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and State-issue cases.

Office of Public Affairs and Administrative Services. This office provides education and outreach to local units of government, law enforcement, and civic groups on civil rights issues including responses to hate crimes. It also administers the Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver and the Contractor Compliance Program which reviews State contractors for compliance with anti-discrimination laws and policies.

Additional Activities. The Department also houses support to the Arab-American Museum, Charles H. Wright Museum, and Holocaust Memorial Center.